

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA), Senior Democrat on the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, introduced the Medicare Chronic Kidney Disease Management Act, legislation that would provide uninsured Americans with chronic kidney disease full Medicare coverage and access to disease-related management, education and counseling services. This early entry into Medicare will improve the overall health of these Americans while reducing Medicare costs by slowing down the growth of patients requiring costly dialysis or transplants.

“Americans suffering with chronic kidney disease deserve access to good healthcare and disease-related management, education and counseling services needed to slow down the deteriorating effects of their disease,” said Stark. “The tragedy is that the uninsured who suffer from this terrible condition do not have access to these services. My bill provides these individuals with a helping hand by providing access to the care they need when they most need it.”

Under the present Medicare End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) program, individuals do not qualify for coverage until they have permanent kidney failure and require dialysis or kidney transplant interventions.

“We need to provide treatment to kidney patients much earlier,” said Stark. “Research shows that access to disease related care earlier in the course of the illness slows down the progression toward permanent kidney failure, decreases the occurrence and intensity of related diseases and decreases overall mortality rates.”

More than 300,000 individuals are currently covered under the Medicare ESRD program. Besides reflecting a major health problem confronting a large number of Americans, it also reflects a major expense to the government. Medicare will spend approximately \$16 billion on the ESRD program this year.

This bill would make uninsured individuals eligible for Medicare upon being certified by a physician that they have advanced kidney disease and would require Medicare Part B premium payments. The bill would also make current Medicare beneficiaries with advanced kidney disease eligible for the disease related management, counseling and educational services.

“This bill is a twofer. First, it will improve the health and quality of life for those suffering from chronic kidney disease. Second, it will save Medicare money by slowing down the growth in the number of people who require costly kidney dialysis or transplantation care. It’s a win-win solution Congress ought to pursue,” concluded Stark